

N^o 14
*Human Reason an INSUFFICIENT GUIDE
in Matters of Religion and Morality.*

Being the SUBSTANCE of TWO
SERMONS

Preach'd before the

University of OXFORD,
A T
St. MARY's Church,

On Sunday, October 27, 1734,

A N D

Monday February 2. 1735-6.

In which the ARGUMENTS laid down by
Mr. Chubb, in Two Pamphlets,

INTITULED,

A Discourse on Reason with Regard to
Religion and Divine Revelation,

A N D

The Sufficiency of Reason in Matters of
Religion farther considered,

Are particularly Examined.

by JAMES EDGCUMBE, B. D. Fellow of *Exeter*
College, *Oxon.*

L O N D O N, Ⓢ

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University of Oxford

by MARY'S Church

On Sunday, October 27, 1774

Monday, February 2, 1775

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Mr. Cress, at the Temple



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The Subjunctive of Reason in Men of
Religion is thus considered

And particularly in Men of

James Hargrave, B.D. Fellow of Balliol
College, Oxford

LONDON

Printed by J. Smith, at the University Press, Oxford



2 COR. iii. 5.

*Not that we are sufficient of our Selves
to think any Thing, as of our Selves,
but our Sufficiency is of God.*

TH O' the Words here cited have a natural and immediate Reference to that *Knowledge and Sufficiency*, which the first Preachers of the Gospel had, in order to the Performance of their great Work; yet may they with Propriety be apply'd to all Mankind with Respect to the common Duties of *Religion and Morality*. It is as true of every Man as of the *Apostles*, that *we are not sufficient of our Selves to think any Thing as of our Selves*. Even Reason itself, That noble distinguishing Faculty of our Nature, is the Gift of God; and all the Sufficiency we are thereby Masters of, must be as much referred to the *supreme Author of our Being* as our Life itself. And tho' we cannot pretend as great Difficulties and Hazards in the ordinary Discharge of our Duty; yet neither can we plead an entire Exemption: But must own our selves deficient in many Instances, both in Speculation and Practice, even in the common Affairs of Life, it is not always easy, either to discover what Part we are to, or to keep up to it when known. *We mistake*

frequently in Matters of the greatest *Moment* and *Concern*; and shew evident Tokens of *Weakness* and *Inability*, where we would willingly be thought to have the greatest *Strength* and *Sufficiency*.

The Account I have been giving you, is, I am persuaded a true one, and confirmed by every Man's private Experience. There is scarce a *Character* in all History, whether *Sacred* or *Profane*, which is not in *some* Part or *other* a Proof of it, And Arguments may be drawn from the *Nature* and *Circumstances* of Mankind to support it.

But the Misfortune is, Men are fond of being thought *knowing* in Things of a *Moral* Nature; however ignorant they may find themselves in other Matters, in *This* most Men are apt to think they are capable of determining for themselves; and therefore will not easily submit to *Foreign* Decisions. And as this Notion took its Rise from the *Pride* and *Conceit* of Men; so has it been the constant Occasion of all those *Errors*, which have been advanced in the *Schemes* of *Particular* Moralists.

The *presumed Sufficiency* of Reason in Matters of *Religion* and *Morality*, plainly took its Rise from this Principle. By not knowing the true *Bound* and *Limits* of their *Understanding*, Men have been led into Mistakes concerning the *Extent* of their *Knowledge*, and by seeing their Reason adequate to *some* Truths, they have been tempted to believe it is so to *all*. But this is a Consequence by no means to be admitted. For *Human Capacities* as well as *Human Nature* are finite; even in the most *Exalted* *Geniusses*, they are not very extensive; they reach originally no farther than the *outward Objects* of our *Senses*; and therefore are suited only to such Things as lie within *Their* Views. And even what these represent to us are little more than the *Surfaces* of Things: "Our Ideas, Mr. Lock says, are only the Effects of certain Powers in

"*jects without us.*" They give us no Notion of the *Inward Make* and *Constitution* of the Bodies themselves, or of those *Springs* and *Causes* by which these Powers operate. Of *These* the greatest Philosopher is as ignorant as the most illiterate. We see indeed the Effects produced, but know not the Causes from whence they flow.

'Tis true indeed, the Mind of Man frequently dilates and extends itself beyond its native Bounds; being once furnished with Ideas, it is capable of uniting and comparing them to an almost infinite Variety; of supplying the Want of direct and proper ones by Secondary Images, and thereby forming to itself some Notion of those Things, which cannot be Objects of any of our Senses. But even here our Capacities are far from being *absolutely perfect*, or in all Cases *sufficient*: In some Points they quite fail us, in others they give us *partial* and *imperfect Representations*, which at best serve only to confound or mislead us: And even in those Cases where they are *most perfect*, they are frequently void of Certainty, or of giving us that *Affurance* and *Satisfaction*, which a *Scrupulous* and *Inquisitive Mind* would be apt to require and insist upon.

But our Adversaries are far from contending for an *Universal Sufficiency of Human Reason*. They are willing enough to allow it to be defective in many Points of *Natural Knowledge*; but in *Religion* and *Morality*, they very much question it: Here they presume every one is capable of judging for himself; his own *Reason* is a *sufficient Guide* to him, and all *Instructions*, from whence soever derived, are as *ridiculous* as they are *needless*.

With what Views these extraordinary Principles are now advanced, I shall not at present enquire. The Influence they have on our *Ecclesiastical* and *Civil Constitutions*, will justify every *Englishman* in his Attempts to disprove them; and make every

every serious Welwisher to our *Religion* and our *Country*, cautious in admitting such Doctrines, as are plainly destructive of both.

And here it is obvious to take Notice, that this Doctrine is directly contrary to the whole Tenor of *Scripture*. The *Sacred Writings* every where shew us the *Vanity* as well as *Weakness* of *Human Wisdom*; how unable we are to search into or discover the *hidden Things of God*, and how insufficient the best of us are to think any Thing as of our Selves, or to will and to do these Things, which are pleasing and acceptable in the Sight of God. - - - But *Scripture* is what our Adversaries will not acquiesce in. They dispute the *Authority* of the Books themselves, and therefore must not be argued with upon this Principle. I shall chuse rather to examine it on the Foot of *Natural Light*; and endeavour to prove from common and rational Principles, that *Reason* is not a sufficient Guide in Matters of *Religion* and *Morality*.

But before I proceed to this, it will be necessary to explain the Terms made use of; and shew what I understand by the Word *Reason*, and what by its being a *Sufficient Guide in Matters of Religion and Morality*.

By *Reason* then I mean *Human Reason*, and by *Human Reason* the Principle or Faculty of Reasoning, as it subsists in every Individual of the *Human Species*. This Definition is exactly agreeable to the Account given by our Adversaries themselves; and therefore at present I shall presume it to be granted me. And among the several Senses of the Words *Sufficient Guide in Matters of Religion and Morality*, I shall at present consider it in this View; viz. That by it is meant such a Guide, as is capable, by itself, without any other Assistance, of directing us, the nearest Way, both as to the Knowledge and Practice of every thing we are concerned to know

or

or do, in our *Religious* and *Moral* Capacities. This Sense I chuse to insist on, not only because most expressive of the Apostle's Meaning in the Passage before us; but also as most agreeable to the Schemes of those Gentlemen whose Principles I am examining.

Now, in order to settle this Point, it will be necessary to observe, That there is but one Way of coming at any Truth whatsoever in the Use of our Reasoning Faculties; viz. by those *Ideas* which we have some time or other received from *Sensation* and *Reflection*; That the Knowledge of *Moral* Matters is obtained this way, as well as *Natural* Knowledge; and, That no Man can pretend to a greater Degree of *Perfection* in the one Case, than he can do in the other. These are Points which the Generality of *thinking* Men will easily allow me. Hence it is obvious to remark, That our Knowledge can reach no farther than we have *Ideas*; That *It* must share all the *Defects* and *Imperfections* of *them*; and consequently *It* will be always *obscure* and *confused*, in proportion as *These* are less *clear* and *distinct*. If therefore there are any Matters of a *Moral* and *Religious* Nature, in which either our Perceptions *fail* us, or in which they are *deficient* and *imperfect*, or in which they are *obscure* and *confused*; in any or all of these Cases, our Reason must be an *Insufficient Guide* to us, must be utterly incapable of discovering those Truths which we are so much concerned to know.

But we are told, That "*Human Reason is, or ought to be, a Sufficient Guide in Matters of Religion*; That Man, as he is an *Accountable Creature*, answerable to God for his Actions, and to be *amply rewarded*, or *severely punished*, in another World, according as he behaves himself in this, has a *Right*, by the Laws of common Equity, to be invested with such a Capacity

"city

“ *city or Power, as is sufficient* (when duly exercised) to *discover* what it is he is *accountable for*,
 “ and what is which renders him the *proper Object* of *Divine Favour or Displeasure*; and which
 “ likewise is *sufficient* to discover such *Motives* to
 “ a right Behaviour, as are an equal Balance to
 “ all those Temptations, the present Constitution
 “ of Things unavoidably leads him into; and
 “ which Capacity will, in *Reason and Equity*, render him *inexcusable*, if he miscarries *.”

Admitting all this to be true, yet how will this Author prove his Consequence? Is it necessary that, because Man has a *Right to such a Sufficiency*, he should therefore be *sufficient of himself*? Will not this *Right* be equally answered, tho’ we should receive all our *Sufficiency* from God; and tho’ the *Duties* we are to perform, and the *Motives* to them, should be all made known by an *External Revelation*? If it may, then no Imputation can lie, in this Case, “ upon the great Maker
 “ and Governor of the World, as if he wanted
 “ either *Understanding* or *Disposition* to have made
 “ and constituted Things better, or to have dealt
 “ *fairly and equitably* with his Creatures” †; because a *Divine Revelation* must be allowed to be as *capable* of investing us with all those Capacities and Powers, which we have a *Right* to in the present Case, as the greatest *Sufficiency* of *Human Reason* can possibly be.

It is further urged by this Writer §, “ That
 “ Man, in his *Natural State*, was destitute of
 “ *Divine Revelation*, and that for a considerable
 “ Time; — That, as to the *Jewish Revelation*
 “ That was not intended to be a Guide in Mat

* Mr. Chubb’s Discourse on Reason with regard to Religion and Divine Revelation, p. 4, 5.

† Mr. Chubb, &c. p. 5.

§ Comp. p. 4. with p. 12.

ters of Religion to *all* our Species, but only to the *Jewish Nation*: And as to the *Christian*, many Ages were past before it was given; and since it has been given, it has been far from prevailing all over the World; and consequently, Multitudes of our Species have been very *hardly* and *unkindly* dealt with."

In Answer to this, I must beg leave to observe, That Mankind were never *entirely* destitute of a Revelation in *some* sort or *other*. The Sacred Writings inform us* of an *Extraordinary* and *Supernatural* Discovery of the Divine Will, even in the Time of Man's *Innocence*: And after the *Fall*, we have frequent Notices of several *Occasional* Communications from the Supreme Being to the Families of the World, even before they were distributed into different Countries. And tho' the *Jewish Revelation* was intended for the more especial Service of the *Jews*, yet this was principally with regard to their *Civil Polity*: The *Moral* and *Religious* Part of it, properly so called, was not so much confined; it was of *perpetual* and *universal* Obligation; and communicated to a People, who, by their prodigious *Figure* and *Credit*, were most likely to spread the Knowledge of it to the other Parts of the World. And as to the *Christian Dispensation*, notwithstanding the Lateness of its Promulgation, and its having not yet prevail'd all over the World; yet it will appear, upon Examination, to have been given at a Time the most fit and proper for that Purpose, when almost the whole World was in *Expectation* of it, and was most disposed to receive it. And tho' it is not yet universally admitted, yet this is rather owing to the *Obstinacy* and *Perverseness* of Men, and the *Eventual* Consequences of Things, than to any *Unkindness* or

* Gen. ii. 16, 17.

Cruelty in God, who is equally good to all his Creatures, and who, in *this Dispensation* especially, manifestly intended the common Happiness and Salvation of all Mankind. So that upon the whole, it will appear, that Mankind have been always furnished with *sufficient Means*, if duly exercised, of discovering, what they are accountable for, and what will render them the *Objects of Divine Favour or Displeasure*, with *sufficient Motives* to counterbalance all Temptations, notwithstanding the *Insufficiency of Human Reason*.

But it is not mine Intention at present to enter largely into the Dispute with our Adversaries, and examine all the Arguments they have alledged in Favour of their Scheme. It will be sufficient for my present Purpose to attempt a direct Proof of the Point I am to establish, and to shew from common and rational Principles, that *Human Reason* neither is nor can be a *sufficient Guide* in Matters of Religion and Morality.

Human Reason may be considered in two Senses either in a more *large* Sense, as it subsists in every Individual of the Human Species; or in a more *limited and restrained* Sense, as it is to be met with only in the more knowing and thinking Part of Mankind. The present Dispute with our Adversaries confines me principally to the *first* of these Senses; because they suppose this *Sufficiency* to be in every particular Person, even in those of the meanest Capacities, and under all the most disadvantageous Circumstances they can possibly fall into*. But I am unwilling to take Advantage of any one for an Expression. The Cause I am defending doth not need it, the Reason of the most improved Minds

* See Christianity as old as the Creation, and Mr. Chubb's Appendix to the Grounds and Reasons for the Observation of the 5th of Nov. and 30th of Jan. in the Church of England.

insufficient in many Points of *Religion* and *Morality*, and as long as I can shew this, I need not concern myself with the *Vulgar* and *Illiterate*. These, as they have made *less Improvements*, so must they be *less sufficient*.

The Point then, which I am to establish, is this, that we are, even in our most exalted Understandings, by the mere Workings of our own Reason, without any Thing superadded, incapable of knowing and practising all those Things, which are of a *Moral* and *Religious Nature*, and which concern us in our *Religious* and *Moral Capacities*. This Point I propose to consider, with a principal Regard to *Knowledge* only; presuming that if I can make that Part good, the other will easily be allowed me; since it is our Adversaries own favourite Maxim, *that no one can practise farther than he knows*.

And here I cannot but observe, notwithstanding the pretended Sufficiency of Human Reason, that Mankind have never yet been furnished with a competent Scheme of Religion and Morality, on the mere Foot of Rational Principles only. If we look into the *Ancient Philosophers*, from whom something of that kind was most likely to be expected, we shall find them to be miserably deficient in almost every Instance. In some Things they are entirely ignorant; in others they are very uncertain and doubtful; and even in those Cases where they have been most fortunate in their Inquiries, they have yet missed some Points they were in pursuit of. And as to our *Later Moralists*, notwithstanding the Advantages they have had above those of ancient Times, yet most of them have been truly sensible, on very important Points, how much they wanted a Guide; and one of them in particular, tho' he had almost convinced himself from his Inquiries into the Nature of moral Ideas, " That Morality

“ was capable of Demonstration, as well as Mathematicks,” yet was so very diffident of the Thing, that whilst in one Place * he owns that the Complexedness of Moral Ideas, and their want of sensible Representations, made them less capable of Certainty and Demonstration than the Ideas of Quantity; in another † he questions very much whether he was able to make it out. But whence is it, that all these learned Men have been thus deficient in their Inquiries? Is it because they wanted Leisure, or Patience, or Opportunity, or Inclination? This was far from being the Case. Nothing of this kind is once suggested by them. But then they complain very much of the *Narrowness* of their *Capacities*, the *Shortsightedness* of their *Understandings*, their *Ignorance* and *Uncertainty* concerning Things of the *biggest Importance*. These are Things to be met with frequently in all their Writings. And if our *modern Freethinkers* have not been so *happy* as to have made this Discovery, it can be ascribed to nothing else but this, that whilst they have been busying themselves about every *other* Part of Knowledge, they have neglected the *principal* and most *important* of all, the *Knowledge of themselves*, and their own *Capacities*.

But supposing they had all the Knowledge it was possible for them to have, admitting that they were furnished with Learning and Abilities, to discover a proper Scheme of Religion and Morality; yet how far have they carried their Capacities in Execution? Have they really furnished the World with a competent Scheme of it? Nothing of this kind now appears. A *Complete System* of Religion and Morality is not to be met with in any one of them, nor do I believe can such an one be possibly made.

* Locke's Essay, Book 4th, Ch. 3. §. 19.

† ——— Famil. Letters, p. 10.

out from the most perfect Collection that can be made from all of them. This, if it be true, is an undeniable Argument of the *Insufficiency of Human Reason*, even in the most improved Minds.

I may go on, and observe farther, that the several Moral Writers both in ancient and modern Times, are frequently found to differ from one another in very essential Points. Even the common Fundamentals of Religion and Morality are not *clearly and indisputably* settled by them. And even in those Cases where they have *determined*, their Sentiments are so very dissonant, that it is scarce possible to know which is the truest. Now each of these Writers drew up his particular System according to his own Notions, *his own Reason* was his Guide, and I will presume that it was *duly exercised*: Allowing it therefore to be a *sufficient Guide*, it will follow, that it must have been so to *all of them*, or to *one or some* exclusive of the *Rest*. If it be said that it was a *sufficient Guide to all of them*, then how can we account for their *different Opinions*? They had all one and the same Guide, and they all aimed at one and the same *End*, and as every End has its proper Means, their Guide, if it had been a *sufficient* one, would have directed them *all the same Way*; but as this did not happen, we can't help concluding, that *Reason* was an *Erroneous* Guide to *some* of them, at least not *sufficient* to direct them all to the great Points they were in Pursuit of. And if you admit the last Supposition, viz. *That Reason was a sufficient Guide to one or some exclusive of the rest*; then the Doctrine of our Adversaries is absolutely false; for *Reason* can't possibly be a *sufficient Guide* to every Individual of the human Species, when it is *sufficient* only to *one or some*, exclusive of *all others*. It remains then, that *Reason* was a *sufficient Guide* to *neither* of them, and that every Man whatsoever is incapable, *by the mere Workings*
of

of his own Reason, without any Thing superadded, of discovering all those Things which are of a Religious and Moral Nature, and which concern us on our Religious and Moral Capacities.

Thus Matters stand as to the Evidence of Fact; it appears from the Writings of the most celebrated Moralists, that there are plain Marks of Insufficiency to be found in all of them. Let us now see how the Point before us can be supported on the Foot of Argument.

If we look back to the first Beginnings of Reason, and examine into the true State of it in our more early Years; we shall find, that it is infinitely small; that it is a long Time, ere Children discover any Principle superior to Sense, or have any Ideas, but what are excited in them, by the most obvious Qualities of those Objects, which constantly surround them. When they have Ideas, how long is it before they attend to them, at least to Advantage? their Minds must be regularly formed to it by Education and Instruction; they are gradually led into Knowledge by the Direction of others, and receive their very first Sentiments from foreign Assurances, not their own. This may serve to shew us how insufficient Human Reason, as it subsists in every Individual, is to discover even the first Principles and Rudiments of Knowledge. It is manifestly incapable of doing this, without some Assistance and Direction from others.

But we will suppose at present, that the Man is come to the true Use of his Faculties, and is capable of going on and making Enquiries by himself. The first Thing he is to do is to get clear and distinct Ideas of Things, to compare them together, and to find out every the least Agreement or Difference which is between them. This will be necessary in order to prevent Error and Confusion. But is a Man capable of doing this by himself by the mere

Workings

Workings of his own Reason, without any other Help? This is scarcely to be imagined in every Case of *Religious* and *Moral* Concernment. The Nature of the *Supreme Being* himself is in a great measure hid and concealed from. We have Notices indeed from what we see in Things without us, that there is such a Being as *God*, and that he is to be *worshipped* by us: But how or in what Manner that Service is to be performed, is what cannot *certainly* be known by the mere Use of our *Reasoning Faculties*. Neither can we at all discover the Terms on which God will be reconciled to us, and accept of us. We may see the Necessity of a future Obedience, but cannot from thence *certainly* conclude, that it shall atone for our past Transgressions. To *obey* God was always our Duty; to *disobey* him always carry'd with it the Notion of *Guilt*, and *Guilt* naturally suggests *Punishment*. If therefore we are to argue on *Rational Principles* only, would it not be obvious to demand, what Certainty are we capable of gaining on this important Subject? The *Divine Benevolence* may be thought sufficient for this Purpose: But when we come to apply it, this Difficulty will at least arise; that to pardon Offences frequently repeated, *without some Satisfaction*, is, in a Governor at least, an Argument of the *greatest Weakness*, and therefore cannot make up no Part of that *Benevolence* which is attributed to the *Supreme Being*.

We see then, that Difficulties attend us in our first setting out on *Religious Enquiries*. What concerns the Object and Foundation of *Religion*, is not perfectly clear to us.

If we look into ourselves, and our own Natures, new Difficulties will arise. The Freedom of our Wills startles us: We see in Fact, that we are free; but how to reconcile the *Contingency* of our Actions with the *Divine Prescience*, is a Point, which

which the greatest *Philosophers* in all Ages have never as yet been able to settle, nor perhaps will it ever be cleared up to us, as long as we are in this imperfect State of Things. And yet it is observable, that this is the very Principle, by which alone we are capable of *Religion* and *Morality*. What Thoughts must we then have of such a Guide, as is not capable of proving to us, indisputably at least, That there is any such thing as *Morality* or *Religion* at all?

I shall go on to confirm this Point farther,

I. From the Nature of our own Ideas.

II. From the Nature and Circumstances of Mankind.

And under the First of these, I shall confine myself chiefly to that Account of our Ideas, which is given us by Mr. *Locke*, in his *Essay of Human Understanding*.

I observe then, That our *Ideas*, so far as they respect *Religion* and *Morality*, will regard both the *Persons*, to whom certain Actions are to be performed, and the *Duties* we are concerned to pay them. If we consider them in the first View, they are plainly *Insufficient* in many Instances: For all our Conceptions of *Persons* and *Things* are partial and incomplete; they none of them exactly answer to the Things they represent, or the *Objects* from which they are taken: There must be therefore many Powers in Things without us, of which we cannot possibly have any *Ideas* at all; and where-ever this happens, we want even the *Principles* of Knowledge.

— If we go farther, and examine the *Ideas* which we have; we shall easily find, that our Knowledge doth not extend itself to all of them. Intuition in all Men, reaches but a little way. — We can seldom

seldom perceive the several Relations of our Ideas by an *Immediate* Comparison of them; and where we call in *Foreign* Assistances, we cannot always find *such Proofs* as we can connect together, with an *Intuitive Knowledge* in all the Parts of the *Deduction*: And yet every one sees at first Sight, that this is absolutely necessary; and that our *Reasoning* Faculties must be vastly *imperfect*, and *insufficient* for *Knowledge*, if they cannot assist us thus far.

The Case I have been insisting on is remarkably true in many Points of *Religion* and *Morality*. The Beings concerned in these, are *God the supreme Governor*, and *subordinate intelligent Beings*. The Notices we have of each of these, and their several *Powers*, are vastly *imperfect*, and consequently fall very short of the *Reality* of Things: They must therefore be subject to all the Disadvantages, which have been mentioned above. Their several *Habitudes* and *Relations*, must be in a good measure unknown to us, nor are we capable of discovering all the several *Agreements* and *Differences*, which are between them; as we are intirely unacquainted with many of their *Capacities* and *Concerns*, so must we be *incompetent* Judges of all their several *Duties* and *Inclinations*. — But this Point hath been already fully considered by other Hands; they have proved beyond Dispute the great *Insufficiency* of *Human Reason* in all these Instances, and how unable we are to discover all the *Relations* we bear to *God* and our *Fellow-Creatures*: We must therefore be unfit to be *absolute* Judges of all the *Duties* and *Obligations* we are concerned in. — But to proceed, I am to examine this Principle, not only with regard to the *Beings*, to whom certain Actions are to be performed, but the *Duties* also we are concerned to pay them. It hath been just noted, that our *Reason* is *insufficient* in many Instances to discover all the *Relations* we bear to *God* and our
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Fellow-Creatures. This is an undeniable Argument for the Point I am now considering. For *Duties* are the immediate Consequences of the *Relations* we sustain, and are only discoverable by the Knowledge of them; and therefore, if these are in any Instances *undiscoverable* by us, the *Duties* resulting from them, must be intirely *unknown*. The Case is the same, where they are not *clearly* and *easily* discernable. Where ever this happens, it hinders us from distinguishing them as we ought; and the occasions *Confusion* and *Mistake*, not only as to the *Relations* themselves, but to the *Duties* arising from them.

No one can possibly be ignorant of this, who is at all used to exercise his *reasoning Powers*. Difficulties of this kind occur in every Deduction which we make. We meet with them frequently in our arguings on Things of *Natural Knowledge* and must always expect them, when we bring our *Religious* and *Moral Enquiries* to the Test. *Ideas* themselves in a great measure contribute to it; and therefore it is what must always happen as long as our *Perceptions* are what they are. I have before shewn this with regard to those of *Relation*; I shall now prove it likewise of those of *particular Duties*.

And here it is obvious to take notice, that our *Notions* of *particular Duties*, which are discovered by the use of our *Reasoning Faculties*, are all of them *Artificial* *Combinations* of *simple Ideas* of various kinds, and differ from those of *Substances* in this; that these are referred to some outward Patterns existing in Things; whereas the former are perfectly *Arbitrary*, and therefore are referred to no other Standard but themselves. I need not press these Principles, because all *skillful* and *understanding Writers* have given this Account of them.

them. Let us see then how the *Sufficiency of Human Reason* can be supported on this View.

I allow indeed that these *Nomons* as they are *Voluntary Collections* made by the Mind, cannot be in their own *Natures Adequate*. But then should be remembered, that this holds good only with regard to *those Collections*, which a Man makes himself: For as for those which are formed from the *Ideas of other Persons*, the Case is otherwise, for these do plainly refer to a Pattern different from themselves, and therefore, as they may not exactly correspond to it, so may they be faulty and inadequate.

And this is the true State of Things with reference to our *Ideas of Religious and Moral Matters*. Most of them are formed from the *Sentiments of other Persons*: We receive them at first from the instructions of our *Parents and Teachers*, and therefore cannot have them in a more perfect Manner than we at first received them. And admitting that we received them in the *most perfect Manner*, yet many Things interfere which will render the *Knowledge* of them very defective. For we learn them in our more *early Years*, before our *thinking Faculties* have been much opened, or our *Judgements* come to any *Maturity*. In these *Circumstances*, we shall be in many Cases *careless and inattentive*; several Things will escape our *Notice*: at least the *Order* in which they have been delivered: Either of which will introduce great *Difficulties*, when we come to reflect upon them by ourselves. And after all, what is it that we learn? The *Ideas* themselves are concealed from us: We are brought acquainted only with the *Names* which stand for them, and are left to find out the *Meaning* of those *Names* by our own *Experience* and *Observation*. Here a large Scene of *Difficulties*

presents itself to our View. For in the first Place the *Ideas* they stand for, are vastly *Complex*, and are generally so blended together, that we cannot easily discover their Differences; or whether they belong more to the Name given to them, than to any other: And where-ever this happens, it must necessarily introduce great Obscurity and Confusion. As the *Idea* itself cannot clearly be distinguished by us; so neither can the *Duty* it should discover, be at all discernible.

It is to be observed farther on this Head, that our *Ideas* of this kind are frequently *clear* and *distinct* in one Point, while in others they are very *obscure* and *confused*: That in some Cases, we can with the greatest Ease discover both the *Principle* and *Reasons* of particular Acts; whereas in others we are often at a loss, and know not what End we are to pursue, or by what Means it is most likely to be obtained. 'Tis true indeed, this is and must be the Case, with regard to all our *Complex Ideas* whatsoever; they are therefore all of them so far liable to Doubts and Uncertainties. But then it should be remembred, that our Notions of *Moral* and *Religious* Matters are of all others mostly so. For our other *Ideas* may be for the most Part distinguished clearly from the several Patterns, from whence they are taken; whereas these having no other Standard but themselves can possibly have nothing but themselves by which they can be distinguished.

Hence I think it may be asserted with good Authority, that our *Reason* is not so *sufficient* a Guide in *Moral* and *Religious* Matters, as it is in Points of *Natural Knowledge*: And if the *greatest* and *wisest* Masters of *Reason* have found by Experience their *Intellectual Faculties*, incapable of informing them in many Points of *Philosophy*; with how much

much better Reason can we assert it in *Religion* and *Morality*, where our Ideas are more *uncertain* and *doubtful*; and where, as we have less *clear* and *distinct* Notions, so must we have a more *obscure* and *confused Knowledge*?

This suggests to us a proper Answer to what has been observed by our Adversaries in support of their Doctrine. The Principles they argue from are *, "That there is a natural and essential Difference in Things; — that this Difference exhibits a *Reason* or *Rule* of *Action* to every Moral Agent; — and that it ought to determine the Will of every Rational Creature to the Performance of that Action." — But admitting these Principles to be true; yet how will this Gentleman prove his Consequence? For *Reason* can't be a *sufficient Guide* to us, unless it be capable of directing us to what we ought to *do* or *forbear* in any Instance; nor is it capable of doing this, unless it can discover all the *Agreements* and *Differences* of Things: How much soever therefore there may be a *natural and essential Difference in Things*, and how much soever that Difference may and doth exhibit a *Reason* or *Rule of Action*, &c. yet it can never do so to us, nor can it possibly determine us, where we are not capable of knowing it. *Reason* therefore is, and may be *insufficient* notwithstanding the Differences, which are in Things.

But there are other Difficulties attending us, which arise not so much from Things, as from our selves; for as our *Ideas* of *Moral* and *Religious* Matters are *Voluntary Collections*, and such as are perfectly *Arbitrary*; it cannot be expected, but that they will be combined, according to the *Turns* and *Ways of thinking*, which are to be met with in

* Mr. Chubb's Sufficiency of Reason in Matters of Religion further considered.

Mankind :

Mankind: And as these are always various according to their several *Educations, Prejudices, Inclinations, &c.* so will their several Associations be vastly different. This must necessarily introduce great Confusion in our *Religious and Moral Enquiries*, where *Reason* is our only Guide. For *Religion and Morality* are Things of a very uniform Nature, and therefore can only be judged of by Principles as *uniform* as themselves. Various Sentiments and Opinions therefore can never be an adequate Measure and Boundary of Right and Wrong, Good and Evil: They will always introduce different Schemes of *Religion and Morality*; and as these cannot all be true, so they may be every one of them false.

This will appear the more probable, when we consider, that the Combinations in Men's Minds are generally owing to *Chance and Custom*: Men do not always connect those Ideas which are most of kin; they are, for the most Part, such only, as fit their particular *Taste and Fancy*, and will best favour their *Passions and Inclinations*. This must hinder us from judging sufficiently of *Religion and Morality*, on whatever Principles we shall consider them. If we consider them as founded on the *Reasons and Finesses of Things antecedently to the Will of God*; then it is obvious to conclude, that Ideas which are not combined according to Nature, can never discover to us what is founded on Nature: And if we consider the *Will of God* as the Foundation of *Religion and Morality*, our Reason must be much more insufficient, inasmuch as we are incapable of discovering the Mind and Will of our Fellow-Creatures; and therefore must be much more so with regard to the Supreme Being, who is placed so much above our Comprehensions; infinitely superior to every Thought and Conception of our Minds.

I shall go on to confirm this Point farther from the *Nature* and *Circumstances* of Mankind. O

I observe then, that the *Nature* of Man is such, that his *Reason* can't possibly be a *sufficient Guide* in Matters of *Religion* and *Morality*. This will appear very evident, if we consider that our *Nature* is a *finite Nature*, and that all our *Capacities* are confin'd within certain *Bounds*. Every Thing therefore can't be discoverable by us; because this would give us an *infinite Knowledge*, such as our *Nature* is incapable of obtaining. *Human Reason* therefore can't be *absolutely perfect*, but must be capable of a great many *Additions*, and may receive several *Truths*, for which it is, of itself, *insufficient*.

Let it be considered farther, that a great Part of *Religion* and *Morality* contains *Truths* relating to the *Supreme Being*; and if it be allowed at the same time, that the *Nature* of the *Supreme Being* is of itself *infinite*; it must unavoidably follow, that many *Truths* may relate to that *Nature*, to which our *Capacities* are by no means *adequate*. And if these should have any *Relation* to *Religion* and *Morality*, as it is more than possible that they may, in this Case, our *mere Reason* can't be a *sufficient Guide* to us.

And as to those *Truths* relating to the *Supreme Being*, which we are capable of discovering, how little are our *Faculties*, unaided by *Foreign Assistance*, capable of directing us? Even the *Knowledge* of the *Existence* of a *God*, tho' it may be demonstrated by *rational Principles*, yet cannot be made out by any one Man without some *Help*. There is a great deal of previous *Knowledge* necessary for this Purpose, to get which will require more *Time* than is allowed to the longest *Liver*,

(were

(were our Lives much longer than they are) if he was to have no other Assurances than what his own Observations furnish him with. For when proper Deductions have been made of that Time which is necessary for the Support of the *Animal Life*; when we have allowed for getting a competent Maintenance for our Selves and our Dependants; for ordinary Refreshments of Nature, for Exercise, Diversions, &c. all which are necessary to keep us in proper Spirits; how little will remain to make Enquiries into *Nature*? scarcely sufficient to find out even the Things which are before us. And even when we have discovered these, how little a Way have we advanced towards the desired End! Many Pieces of Knowledge are still wanting, before we can come at our Conclusion; For the bare Knowledge of *Things* is nothing else, but the Knowledge of a Set of *Materials*, which must be *tryed* and *experienced* several Ways, before we can discover all their *Uses*: And when this is done, as the *Uses* of Things are almost *infinitely various*, how many *Chances* are there against our hitting immediately on this Conclusion, *that there is a God*! It is not the most *obvious* one; nor doth it immediately follow from them. It must be made out by a great many *Inferences* and *Deductions*; each of which will require a good deal of *Care* and *Exactness*; and as this will necessarily *protract* the Time; so must it consequently make the *Operation* still more *tedious*.

There is no thinking Man but knows this to be true. Every one who makes Researches into Nature, notwithstanding the Labours of those, who have gone before him in these Enquiries, finds great Difficulties, whenever he strikes into a new Path. And if we had not this Experience, yet the slow Progress of *Arts* and *Sciences*, and the late Discovery of the *True God*, are undeniable Proofs

of the *Weakness and Insufficiency of Human Reason* in every private Man, when unassisted by every thing, but his own Experience and Observation.

Let us suppose however for once, (tho' the Thing itself is far from being true) that every Man whatsoever has a *clear and just* Notion of the Being and Attributes of a *God*; yet this is but one Step towards the Knowledge of *Religion and Morality*. We must be acquainted likewise with the Nature of *our selves and other Beings*, the several Relations and Differences of Things, and the various Obligations arising from them. " * We ought to know the whole Scheme, Order, and State of Things, the Methods of God's governing the World, his Design in creating Mankind, the Original Dignity of Human Nature, the Ground and Circumstances of Mens present corrupt Condition, the Manner of the Divine Interposition necessary to their Recovery, and the glorious End, to which God intended finally to conduct them," before we can be competent Judges of every Thing which concerns us in our *Religious and Moral Capacities*. And are these Things *clear and evident*, as to be discoverable by us in the mere Use of our Reasoning Faculties? This, I fear, is far from being true. Our Confinement to Part of *Space*, which bears no Proportion to the vast Extent of the *Universe*, hinders us from making *large Enquiries* into the *Order and State of Beings*: Even Matter itself, with which we are more immediately conversant, is not *perfectly and adequately* knowable by us; and as for *Spiritual Beings*, as they are not the *Objects* of any of those *Senses*, which are the proper Inlets of our *Ideas*; so have we naturally no *Ideas* at all about them, but what we form to our selves from the *Preceptions* we have of the Operations of our own Minds.

* Dr. Clark's Evid. Nat. revealed Religion, p. 138.

And if we are so much at a Loss in respect of the *Nature of Beings*; I think it is easy to conclude, that we are much more in the Dark, in Reference to their *Relations and Dependencies*, all which have such an immediate Connection with the several *Natures and Circumstances of Things*, as to be only knowable by them. The Consequence of which is this, that in all those Cases, where our Knowledge of the *Natures and Circumstances of Things* is *imperfect, obscure, or confused*, our Knowledge of their *Relations* must be vastly *deficient*, altogether incapable of giving us any *Notions of those several Parts of Religion and Morality*, which depend upon them. But this hath been already considered under my former Head.

Thus far then it appears that *Human Reason* is of itself insufficient to discover the *Nature and Relations of Beings*, and the whole *Schema, Order, and State of Things*. The other *Requisites to a competent Knowledge of Religion and Morality*, are still much more hard to be obtained, because they respect either the *Methods and Design of an infinitely Wise and Good Being*, which must be absolutely unsearchable to our *Finite Capacities*, or else some particular *States and Circumstances of our own Nature*, which were past many Years before we were in Being, and consequently not knowable by us, unless discovered to us. So that upon this View of Things, *Human Reason* must be a very *Insufficient Guide* in our *Researches into Religion and Morality*.

I may carry the Point still higher, and observe that *Human Nature* is not only *finite*, and so not suited to comprehend every thing which concerns us in our *Religious and Moral Capacities*; but that it is in itself *imperfect*, and so far liable to *Error both in Speculation and Practice*. This must

consequently make every Man's Reason an *Insufficient Guide* to him, even in those Things which lie within our Reach. However well adapted our Capacities may be to discover particular Truths, yet as long as we are subject to *Mistakes of Judgment*, to *wrong Apprehensions* of Things, and *wrong Assent*; so long shall we be disqualified for thinking sufficiently of these *great and important Points*. And yet this is the true State of Things with regard to *Human Nature*. Our *Ideas*, and the several Ways by which they are usually combined, contribute a good deal to it: And if these did not, yet there are other Circumstances of our *Nature*, which render it almost unavoidable. We are by Nature *free*: Truth therefore doth not act *irresistibly* upon us; nor do the several Proofs, by which it is discoverable, *necessarily determine* our Assent. And as we always have in ourselves *Animal Passions*, which strongly solicit us to one particular Side, and for the most part to that which is against Truth; our *Determinations* will naturally be carried the *same Way*; and we shall be constantly tempted to evade the most *apparent Probabilities*, in Favour of our most *darling Inclinations*.

There are moreover other Circumstances, which hinder Persons from making sufficient Enquiries. Health, Leisure, Convenience, Opportunity, and Will to use the several *Abilities* they enjoy, are not always Attendants on the most *improved Minds*; and those, who have these, have not always the Sincerity to use them *well*: So that upon a Review of these Circumstances, we can't help concluding, that *Human Reason* is, and always must be, in the present State of Things, an *Insufficient Guide* in Matters of *Religion and Morality*.

Nor let any one on this Account pretend to charge God *foolishly*, or complain of being *hardly* used. We have the Opinion of a learned Enquirer

into Nature *. " That Reason, even in its present
 " State of *Insufficiency*, is wisely proportioned to our
 " Necessities, and relative to our present
 " State; and had it been more extensive, we
 " should have been less capable of answering
 " the End of our Creation. We are only placed
 " here to be Virtuous. Our Reason is dependent
 " on the Senses; by whose Ministration it receives
 " Intelligence of every thing relating to the Life,
 " over which it presides. This Reason is subject
 " to a Body, and accompanied with a Set of
 " Limbs: All these Organs have been given it,
 " not for Contemplation but Labour, and the Per-
 " formance of proper Actions. These are the
 " Purposes for which we have received it, and
 " they would have been defeated by stronger Illu-
 " minations." And again †, " to quit the Truths
 " that are presented to us; to wander after In-
 " formations that elude our Curiosity; to pretend
 " to Wisdom instead of Industry; this is to for-
 " sake the Path of Virtue, which is open before
 " us, and to strike out new Tracks, wherein we
 " are interrupted at every Step by insurmount-
 " able Difficulties. 'Tis to resist the Order estab-
 " lished by Wisdom itself: This Wisdom shines
 " bright enough to guide us to our Welfare
 " but as yet has not dissipated all the Shadows
 " and when it has even added Revelation to Rea-
 " son, its Intention was to clear up any Doubt
 " we may entertain, with respect to the Way we
 " ought to proceed in, and not to lift up the Veil
 " that deprives us of the true Knowledge of Things
 " That Period is not yet arrived.

Having proceeded thus far in the Direct Proof
 of the *Insufficiency of Human Reason*, it may not be
 improper to produce some *Collateral Evidences*. And

* Spect. of Nature, Part the 2d. p. 278, 279.

† Ibid p. 283.

here, it is a Rule justly laid down by Moralists, and Writers of Human Understanding, That " Truth cannot contradict Truth ; " * That " what-
 " ever is inconsistent with the *Peace and Welfare*
 " (or *Good*) of Mankind, is inconsistent with the
 " *Laws of Human Nature, wrong, intolerable ;* " †
 and, That " no Truth, by being known, can
 " have a bad Effect on the *Minds and Lives* of
 " *Men* ; and contrarily, what will always have a
 " bad Effect on the *Minds and Lives* of Men,
 " will have strong *Probability* at least against its
 " being Truth, supposing no Argument could be
 " brought for or against it. " ‖ Let us examine
 the *Sufficiency of Human Reason* by these Principles,
 and see how well it can be supported.

The State of the Doctrine, as maintained by our Adversaries, stands thus : That " every Man
 " either hath, or ought to have, such a Capacity,
 " or Power, residing in him, as is capable, by
 " *itself, without any thing superadded*, of directing
 " us both as to the *Knowledge and Practice* of
 " every thing we are concerned to *know* or *do* in
 " our *Religious and Moral Enquiries*. " And this
 Notion is plainly founded on this Supposition, that
 we otherwise have no possible Means of Direction :
 For we are told, That, " if the present Consti-
 " tution of Things be otherwise, such a Consti-
 " tution is manifestly *wrong*, by being *unequal* and
 " *repugnant to Reason* ; and that it is as unequal
 " in this Case, as the requiring Bricks, without
 " affording Materials for making them. " § This
 Principle being true, these several Consequences
 must necessarily follow from it :

First, That there is no such thing as a Providence presiding over Human Affairs : For, as the

* Locke's Essay.

† Religion of Nature delin.

‖ Enquiry into the Nat. of the Hum. Soul.

§ Chubb's Discourse, p. 3, 4, 5.

Notion of a Providence consists not barely in *upholding Nature*, and its several *Powers* and *Abilities*, but in *directing* and *disposing* it to its proper Ends, in regulating the *Influences* of it, and in fitting it to the *Uses* for which it ought to serve; so must it be entirely inconsistent with that *Sufficiency* of *Reason*, which is contended for; because this, as it is capable, *of itself, without any thing superadded*, of *directing* us, must consequently exclude and deny all possible *Influence* and *Direction* from every other Power. And in this View, the Principle before us will terminate not merely in *Deism*, but in *Atheism*.

It will follow, in the next Place, That there neither *is*, nor *can be* any such thing as *Society*, either in *Morality* or *Religion*: For, as *Society* can serve no other Purpose but to *direct* and *influence* the Conduct of Mankind; so must it naturally suppose and imply in us, a Want of some *outward Assurances*, to support and keep up the Knowledge and Life of *Religion* and *Virtue*. But, as there cannot possibly be such a *Want* in our Nature, on this Scheme of our Adversaries, so neither can there be, agreeably to the *Reasons* and *Natures* of Things, any such State, as *supposes* and *implies* it.

The same may be said of *Friendship*, and other Social Virtues; all which, upon this Foot of Reasoning, must be absolutely inconsistent with the *Reasons* and *Natures* of Things, and consequently, no Part of our *Duty* in any Instance whatsoever: For we can never be obliged to consult with others, how we ought to act in any particular Instance, when we have such a *Counsellor* within us, as *will not, cannot fail of directing us sufficiently*.

I would observe, in the next Place, That, if the Principle I have been examining, be true, then it will follow, that there neither *is*, nor *can be*, any such thing as *Ignorance*, *Weakness*, or *Wickedness*.

ness, among Mankind: For a *perfect* Nature cannot be *deficient* in any thing; nor can a *Law*, which is a *Sufficient Guide* in *Matters of Religion and Morality*, give any *Occasion* for *Error*, either in *Speculation* or *Practice*. Where there is a *Sufficiency* of *Knowledge*, we cannot want *Ideas*, nor want a *discoverable Connection* between *Ideas*, nor be incapable of *tracing and examining* of them; we cannot therefore be *ignorant*: And where there is a *Sufficiency* of *Practice*, we cannot want *Means* of *discovering* a *right Conduct*, or of *following* it, when known; we can neither *omit* *Actions* which are *agreeable*, nor *pursue* those which are *contrary to Duty*; but must always act in a *steady Conformity* to what is *right*. Happy would it be for Mankind, could these *Principles* be *proved* to be *true*! But I fear, *Experience* is *against* us. He who knows any thing, knows this in the *first Place*; that we need not seek long for *Instances* of either kind: A small *Acquaintance* with ourselves will easily inform us, that these *Defects* are not entirely *incon- sistent* with *Human Nature*; and if we observe what passes without us, we shall see innumerable *Proofs* of their *Growth* and *Prevalency* in the *World*. The same *Observations* will shew us the *Existence* and *Usefulness* of an *overruling Providence*, presiding over *Human Affairs*, and of a *State of Society*, directing and influencing *Human Con- duct*: And as these plainly point out to us the *Imperfections* of our *Nature*; so are they, at least, presumptive *Arguments* of the *Insufficiency* of our *Reason*.

In the last Place, I would beg leave to observe, That the *Scheme* I have been examining, is such as cannot possibly be supported, unless it could be proved that *Men* were *infallible*: For, as long as *Human Reason* is liable to *Errors*, and capable of being *deceived*, it cannot possibly be a *Sufficient Guide*

Guide to us in Matters of *Religion* and *Morality*. Whether we are thus infallible or not, needs not now to be proved; it hath been done already, to great Advantage, by the learned Writers in the *Romish* Controversy. The same Arguments will serve in the present Case, the only Difference between them and our present Adversaries being no more than this; that the one confine their Infalibility to a particular Person, or a Number of Men assembled in Council; whereas our *Modern Freethinkers* assert it *universally*, not of a *Number collectively considered*, but of *every Individual distributively taken*.

And as the Doctrine I have been examining, contradicts several undeniable Truths; so is it likewise inconsistent with the general *Peace* and *Welfare* (or *Good*) of Mankind; and when *known* and *believed*, will always have a bad Effect and Influence on the *Minds* and *Lives* of Men. This will appear very evident, if we consider, That Man is a *Social* Creature, and that the End of *Society* was the common Welfare and Good of Mankind: If therefore the Principle I have been considering, is inconsistent with *Society*, it must be destructive of the general Peace and Welfare of the World; and must always be productive of the most dismal Consequences, with respect to Human Nature. For there is nothing which could induce Men to enter into Society, but the Sense of their own *Insufficiency*, of their *Dependence* on each other, and their Want of *mutual Assurances*. Take away this Notion from the Minds of Men, and they will soon assert their *Natural Liberty*, and fight their Way thro' all Restraints. " If, when we have
 " the *Privilege* of Society, and Laws, we can
 " scarce preserve our own, or be safe; what a
 " woful Condition should we be in *without them*;
 " exposed to the Insults, Rapines, and Violence.

“ of unjust and merciless Men; not having any
 “ *Sanctuary*, any thing to take Refuge in!”

This, we are told by ancient Writers, was the
 Situation of Affairs, before Men entered into So-
 ciety; and which made some of them represent
 the *State of Nature* to be a *State of War*: And such
 in all Probability would it again be, were we once
 persuaded, that Societies are *useless Things*, and
 that Institutions of *Religion* and *Morality* were both
needless and ridiculous. For it will appear,

III. That this Doctrine, when known and be-
 lieved, will always have a bad Influence on the
Minds and Lives of Men. And here it may be
 observed, That what principally induces Men to
 be kind, *benevolent*, and *obliging* to one another,
 is this; That, in some Case or other, we may
 want their *Help* and *Assistance*. This is what
 chiefly keeps up mutual *good Offices*; and upon
 this likewise is founded the *Reason* and *Influence* of
 that general Law of *Morality*, That we *should do*
to others, as we would they should do to us. But
 let Men come once to know and believe, that *their*
own Reason is a Sufficient Guide to them, and that
 they have no need of the *Assistance* and *Direction*
 of others, Things will then be found to take a dif-
 ferent Turn; we shall find every one very unwill-
 ing to give himself up to the Guidance and Di-
 rection of others, to submit to the Laws and Pre-
 scriptions of his Governors, and to part with his
private Benefit for the sake of the *publick Good*:
 We shall then see none of those noble Principles
 of *Generosity* and *Benevolence*, which are the present
Dignity and Ornament of our Nature; but only the
 rude Remains of an *unwieldy Animal*, naturally

endued with a *Will* and *Power* of hurting others, without any thing to govern and restrain him.

Nor is this an airy imaginary Speculation: We are told by those who have made the largest Enquiries into these Matters, that ~~the~~ Man in his *natural State*, and if left entirely to the Directions of his own Faculties is Wild, Malevolent and Treacherous. And if we had not this Authority, yet the Experience we have of the various Tempers and Dispositions of different Men, in proportion to their several Educations, and the Accounts we have of barbarous and savage Nations, who have not the Advantage of such Assistances, are enough to shew us what will be the Consequence, when Men are to follow only the Directions of their own *Reasons*, without any thing *superadded*.

After all, I do by no means affirm, nor would I be understood to affirm, That all the Consequences, which have been mentioned, are contended for by our Adversaries. Many of them are strenuous Assertors of the *Social Life*; and I am inclined in Charity to hope, that they are *Sincere* in this Particular. All I contend for is, That their Principles naturally lead to these Conclusions; and that it will always be our Duty to be cautious in admitting any Doctrines, which have so *dangerous* and *destructive* a Tendency.

It would be proper, before I dismiss this Subject, to take notice of the several Arguments offered by our Adversaries, in Defence of the Scheme I have been examining: But I have been prevented in this by the Labours of those who have gone before me on this Subject. One however I cannot omit, because it is an extraordinary one: It is principally urged on a particular Case; but, as it in a great measure affects the Whole that I have offered

offered, I cannot well pass over it without making some Remarks upon it.

Mr. *Chubb*, in one of his late Pamphlets*, reasons thus: " If it should be asked, How we can be certain, that God will judge the World, if he had not declared that he will do it? then it may be asked, How we can be certain, that God will judge the World, tho' he has declared that he will do it? God's Declaration alone is not a Ground of Certainty, because he may deceive us; and therefore there must be something in Nature to be a Foundation for Credit, with respect to that Declaration. " Which Foundation for Credit he makes to be the Evidence, that the Thing declared is agreeable to the Reason, Nature, and Fitness of Things, without which no Declaration of God can make us certain of it; neither can we be certain of any such Declaration, but on account of such Connection.

I would know of this Author, what his Opinions are of God and of Nature? For if he acknowledges that God is an *All-perfect* and an *All-good* Being; he must own that he is incapable of being *deceived* himself, or of *deceiving* others; and if he allows, that Nature is to us undiscoverable in many Instances, he must grant, that every Thing founded in Nature is not *knowable* by us. I observe then upon these Principles, that *God's Declaration alone is a sufficient Ground of Certainty*, without any other *Foundation for Credit* whatsoever: Because the *highest Certainty* we can possibly have, is to be *sure* that we are not deceived. Our Author indeed supposes, that *God may deceive us*: But in order to prove this, he must discard God of his *Perfections* and his *Goodness*, and must make the Declarations of Nature, and the Testimony of our

* Mr. *Chubb's* Suffic. of Reason. &c. farther considered, p. 28.

Senses of greater Credit, than the Declaration of God himself.

I don't deny but that God always acts *agreeable to Reason*, and that we are *sure* of it too: But this I assert, that we can't always see the Connection there is between his *Acts*, and the *Reason* to which they are *agreeable*. And therefore, can't assent to his Declarations, on *Account* of such Connection. The *Reason of the Thing*, as being unknown to us, can never be to us a *Foundation for Credit*; whereas the Declaration of God, as being absolutely *indisputable*, must be in every Instance a *sufficient Ground of Certainty*.

I have now gone thro' what I propos'd at first: I have endeavour'd to prove the great Insufficiency of Human Reason, in Matters of *Religion* and *Morality*, from the Nature of our own Ideas, and the Circumstances of Mankind; let me add, that if Matters stand thus, as I have represented them, we should hence learn to have Recourse to an *higher Principle*; to look up to that All-sufficient Fountain of Wisdom and Knowledge, which is alone able to make known to us the several *Obligations* we are under, and the several *Duties* we are to discharge. Our own *Reason* is vastly *short* and *imperfect*: It is of itself incapable of making known to us all the several *Habitudes* and *Relations* of Things: To trust to it therefore for our Discoveries of *Religious* and *Moral* Matters, is to trust to that which cannot *help* us. *Holy David* was so sensible of this, that he very frequently and earnestly desires God to *instruct him in his Will*, to *teach him his Statutes*, to *direct him in the Way* that he should go, and to give him such *Assistances*, as would be sufficient to *quicken* him to the Discharge of his Duty. And it equally concerns every *pious* and *good Man* to *desire* the same *gracious Assistances*; to *receive* them with the greatest *Gratitude* and

and *Thankfulness*, and to *submit* to them with the *greatest Readiness*. To dispute the *Possibility* of such *Assistances*, is to deny our own *Wants*, and the *Goodness* of our *Creator*: To ascribe them to *other Causes*, is to be *base* and *ungrateful*: To receive them, and not submit to them with *Readiness*, is to *abuse* his *Goodness*, and must involve us in the most *Extreme Wickedness* and *Guilt*.

This should teach us to treat a *Revelation* with the utmost *Modesty* and *Reverence*; to consider it as the *Supreme Will* of God, and the *ultimate Rule* of all our *Actions*; to study it with the utmost *Care* and *Diligence*; to submit our *Reason*, and our *Judgments* to the several *Doctrines* and *Precepts* of it; and lastly to consider it as the only *sufficient Guide* to the *Favour of God here*, and his *Eternal Happiness* hereafter.

I shall entreat your *Patience* while I draw some few *Conclusions* from what has been offered.

1. By what has been said, it appears that *Human Capacities* as well as *Human Nature*, are *finite*; we cannot therefore perfectly judge of every *Truth* which is of a *Religious* and *Moral* Nature. And as our *Conceptions* are far from being *perfect* *Representations* of the *Nature* and *Relations* of *Things*, we must make *doubtful* and *uncertain* *Decisions* even in those *Points* which are level to our *Capacities*. This must make us very unfit *Judges* of the several *Truths* we are concerned to know, were we to *lean entirely to our own Understanding*. For as the several *Materials* of our *Knowledge* are far from being *clear* to us, so must our *Reasonings* from them be proportionally *dark* and *obscure*. It may be observed farther on this Head, that *Religious* and *Moral* *Truths* are for the most Part, if not always, *General* and *Universal*. We cannot therefore be *certain* of them, unless we know the *precise Bounds* and *Extents* of the several *Things* of which

which they are Truths: But as this is impossible to be done in Matters of a *Religious* and *Moral* Nature; so must we be incapable of forming any tolerable Judgment of those Truths from the *Notions* and *Conceptions* which we have of Things.— Hence it is obvious to conclude, that the *Law of Nature* is not the *most proper Test* of *Religion*. For if by the *Law of Nature* we understand that Collection of *Moral Duties* which every Man is capable of discovering in the Use of his *Reasoning Faculties*, and which is the only Sense, in which it can be understood in the present Controversy, it is even in the most improved Minds so very imperfect and deficient, that it can't possibly be a *complete Test* of *Religion*. It is incapable of directing us sufficiently either as to the *Persons* to whom *Religious* and *Moral Actions* are to be performed, or the *Duties* we are concerned to pay them.

I am aware that there is another Sense of the *Law of Nature* sometimes contended for, in which it signifies a perfect Collection of all those *Doctrines* and *Precepts* which have a *Real Foundation* in Things. This is undoubtedly a *proper Test*. But then this is not *our Law of Nature*. Such a perfect Collection can't be made by us; it exists only in the *Divine Mind*, and can be communicated to us only by *immediate* or *Traditional Revelation*. And in this View the Judgments we form of *Religion* and *Morality*, cannot be taken from *our Conceptions* of Things, but from the *Revelation of God*.

And if this Reasoning be admitted, then I would infer in the next Place, that our *Obligations to Religion* and *Morality* cannot be founded on the *Reasons* and *Fitnesses* of Things, exclusive of the *Will of God*. By a *Foundation of Obligation*, I would be understood to mean that Principle, by which the Obligation is made known unto us, and upon which the *Reasons* of the Obligation as to us are immediately built. This is what the Generality of thinking Men

Men understand by the Term. Admitting therefore that every Man's own *Reason* is an *insufficient Guide*, and that he is incapable by himself of discovering all the *Relations* and *Habitudes* of Things; it will follow that Mankind must have no *Obligations* at all, or must derive it from some *other Principle*: For nothing can carry Obligation with it any farther than it is or *may be known*: If therefore Mankind cannot *discover* Religious Obligations, as they manifestly *cannot* on the Supposition we are examining, they can't possibly be *Obligations* to them at all.

And allowing that these *might* be discerned by us, yet still the *Reasons* of them would not be so apparent: For the main Spring of all *Rational Actions* is the single Desire of *Happiness* we all find in ourselves. Exclusive of this, we should have no sufficient Incitements to good Actions, nor could we possibly determine ourselves to chuse and prefer *one* Way of acting before *another*. The only Reason which can possibly determine us in this Case, is a greater Degree of *Happiness* to be obtained, or *Misery* to be avoided, by acting thus, than, all Things considered, can be obtained or avoided by acting any other Way. Nothing therefore can oblige us but what has it in its Power to give us *Happiness* or *Misery*. This the most Perfect Knowledge of the *Reasons* and *Fitnesses* of Things, of which we are capable, cannot do. It may shew us a certain *Connection* between our *Action*, and our *Happiness* and *Misery*, but cannot reward or punish our *Obedience* or *Disobedience*. As God is the only Being who is most capable of contributing thus to the *Happiness* and *Misery* of Mankind; so God must be the most proper *Principle* and *Cause* of all *Obligation*. The *Reasons* and *Fitnesses* of Things, as they only discover to us our Obligations on the Supposition of a Being capable of rewarding and punishing us,

us, can never in any Sense be said to lay the Obligation of Religion antecedently to, and exclusively of the Will of God, but in Conjunction with it, and in Subordination to it.

3. I would infer in the 3d Place, that Morality and Religion are not merely *personal* Things, but of a *social Nature*, and that they are incapable of subsisting in any tolerable Degree, without being established in a *civil Manner*. This, with regard to *Morality*, will easily be allowed me. The Interest of *Moral Virtue* is in Fact supported this Way; and the several Improvements which have been hereby made in this Science, both as to Speculation and Practice, will be standing Proofs of the *Reasonableness* and *Necessity* of such an Establishment of it. And besides, as the chief End of Society was to secure *Obedience* to the *general Laws of Nature*; Morality must always make a considerable Part of every Establishment of this kind: All its *Laws*, and all its *Institutions* must be calculated not only to recommend *Virtue* in those particular Instances in which we are most liable to deviate from it, but to enforce the *Observance* of it by proper *Sanctions*, to promote *Obedience* by awakening our *Fears*, and induce us to discharge our *Duty*, by the *Apprehensions* of some *present or future Evil*.

And what hinders Religion from being thus established? Is it because our Nature is more *perfect*, and our Reason a more *sufficient Guide*, in this than in the former Instance? This, if the foregoing Observations be true, is far from being the Case: We have there shewn it to be as incapable of directing us in Religion as in Morality. Is it because Religion is *internal*, and respects the *Conscience* only? This cannot be the Reason; because *Morality* is as much *internal*, and respects the *Conscience*, as Religion can ever be supposed to be. Or lastly, is it because the *Magistrate* is *fallible*; and therefore may

may make choice of a *false Scheme*, as well as a *true one*? This likewise cannot be admitted, unless it can be proved, that the *Magistrate* is more *infallible* in one Case than in the other.

And as there is nothing which hinders *Religion* from being established in a *Civil Way*, so are there many things which *favour* it: For, if you consider *Natural Religion*, this, as it is a Collection of the several Precepts and Doctrines of *Morality*, must necessarily be established with it. And as to *Revelation*, as it contains Truths of the last and greatest Importance, and such as respect *this Life*, as well as *that which is to come*, it cannot be entirely excluded from the *Magistrate's* Care; but must be supported and established, at least so far, as it is necessary to the present *Welfare* and *Good* of *Mankind*. Besides, let it be remembered, that *Sociality* belongs to the *Man*; that it therefore respects the *whole Rational Nature*, and every Part of it; that *Religion* and *Morality* are *Branches* of this Nature; and that many *Duties* required of us in *Civil Life*, are *Parts* of *Religion* and *Morality*: To which I would add an *Observation* allowed of by our *Adversaries* themselves; which is, That the *Religion God wills us to follow*, must be agreeable to the *Circumstances we are placed in*. If this be true, then *Religion* must be a *social Thing*, and must strongly conclude for a *Civil Establishment* of it.

Lastly, and to conclude: Let us all, from a just Sense of the *Weakness* and *Insufficiency* of our *Reason*, learn *not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think*: Let us not magnify our own *Strength*, or boast too much of our own *Abilities*; but let us think *soberly*, according as *God has dealt to every Man*. This Rule *St. Paul* very earnestly recommends to every true *Christian*; and

* See Christianity as old as the Creation.

the Consequences of it are of such *Moment* and *Importance* to us, as should always keep up a fresh and lively Remembrance of it in every thinking Mind. Where there is most of *Pride*, and *Self-sufficiency*, there is least of *Learning* and *Virtue*: for *Pride* and *Fulness* of a Man's Self keeps out *Knowledge*: They generally divert a Man from the direct Way to *Truth*, and carry him into *By-paths*, where he will be constantly wearying himself, either in seeking Things of no *Moment* and *Importance*, or in Pursuit of those he is incapable of obtaining; neither of which will answer his Labours, or bring him nearer to that *Truth* he is concerned to discover.

— This should teach us to enter upon the Search of *Truth* with a becoming *Modesty* and *Humility*, to be content with the several Discoveries we are capable of making; — to entertain all Objects in that *Way* and *Proportion*, in which they are suited to our Faculties, and upon those *Grounds*, on which they are capable of being proposed to us.

Let us always remember, that our Nature is finite, and that our Capacities are not suited to comprehend every *Truth*, or to see every thing we can discover with an equal *Clearness*. — This should induce us to be satisfied with the *Knowledge* of which we are capable; and not to require greater *Certainty*, than the present Circumstances of our Nature will allow. — We are placed here not to know every thing, but those things only which concern our *Happiness*. And as this should teach us to lay out our chief Pains in acquiring those, so it should induce us to receive them with *Thankfulness* in whatever way they are communicated to us; to desire the Divine Assistance in aiding our *Infirmities* in informing our *Judgments*, and in correcting our irregular *Appetites* and *Affections*; in a word, to use the several *Faculties* we enjoy to God's Honour, and our own *Happiness*; to be constant in the Exercise of them.

them; *to be careful in working out our own Salvation;*
and to do every thing, which is, or may be necessary
to recommend us to the Divine Favour and Accept-
ance.

There is an easy Maxim, laid down by a learned
Writer upon this Subject, well worthy the Consi-
deration of every one of us: "With respect to
"all created Beings, that rise to our View, there
"are but three Particulars, wherein we can fix a
"Determination: One must be, a Resolution to
"know nothing; the second, a Desire to com-
"prehend the Whole; and a third, an Inclina-
"tion to search after, and improve to the best
"Advantage, whatever we are capable of know-
"ing. The first Determination is a piece of In-
"dolence, which runs into mere Stupidity; the
"second is a Temerity, which is constantly pu-
"nished; and the third is a Resolution of Pru-
"dence, which, without aspiring to what surpasses
"the Capacities of Man, is exercised with Mo-
"desty, and gratefully uses what was given for
"our Enjoyment." Thus far this Writer. Let
me only add upon it, That, as it is plainly the
Concern of every one in this Place to stick by the
last Determination; so will it be our highest Wis-
dom always to observe and follow it.

* Spect. Nat. last Paragr. 1st Vol.

F I N I S.

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